

AMENDMENTS TO THE SPECIFICATION:

Please replace the paragraph beginning at page 11, line 7, with the following rewritten paragraph:

--After the heating steps at the thermoforming temperature has been performed in the stations ~~16A, 16B~~ 14A, 14B, the heated plastic sheets SA, SB are transferred by means of the devices 15A, 15B to the subsequent stations 16A, 16B to be subjected to the thermoforming into the molds 17A, 17B for shaping them into corresponding thermoformed shells GA, GB according to the procedure illustrated further on in figures 2A-2H of the accompanying drawings.--

Please replace the paragraph beginning at page 13, line 1, with the following rewritten paragraph:

--From figures 3 and 4 it can also be seen that, according to another feature of the invention, pneumatically actuable sheet gripping means are provided for each mold 17A, 17B; the gripping means comprises a pneumatic frame 36A, 36B for gripping the sheets SA, SB from below, around their peripheral edges, on the side opposite to that of the gripping device 24 of the bell-shaped device ~~14A, 15B~~ 15A, 15B as explained further on. In this connection the pneumatic frames 36A, 36B are shaped and sized identically to the pneumatic frames 24 of the two bell shaped devices 15A and 15B. This proves to be extremely advantageous in that it enables the individual sheets SA, SB to be supported along the two processing lines 10A, 10B and

transferred by the bell shaped devices 15A, 15B above the shaping molds 17A, 17B, by gripping the sheets themselves along a narrow peripheral strip. This makes it possible to considerably reduce scraps, and losses of valuable material, compared to the conveying systems previously used in the usual thermoforming plants which make use of belts or other similar conveying systems for the plastic sheets.--

Please replace the paragraph beginning at page 15, line 31, with the following rewritten paragraph:

--The pneumatic gripping device 15A with the sheet SA1 can consequently move from the centering station 13A, to the heating station 14A and the thermoforming station ~~[[15A]]~~ 16A, as schematically shown in figures 2A, 2B, 2C and 2D of the accompanying drawings.--

Please replace the paragraph beginning at page 16, line 10, with the following rewritten paragraph:

--During this step, the plastic sheet material SA1, likewise to the sheet SA2, is further heated to the required thermoforming temperature, both by the upper heater 28 of the gripping device 15A, and by a lower ~~heat~~ heater 47 positioned below in the same heating station 14A. Since during this heating step the plastic material of the sheet is brought up to a temperature close to melting point, and would consequently tend to sag downwards by gravity, the vacuum in the bell of gripping device 15A is maintained and suitably controlled so as to keep

the sheet SA1 in a substantially flat condition, throughout the entire heating period until it has been positioned above the thermoforming mold 17A.--

Please replace the paragraph beginning at page 17, line 20, with the following rewritten paragraph:

--During the thermoforming of the shell, the peripheral edge of the plastic sheet SA1 is retained against the peripheral edge of the mold ~~[[17B]]~~ 17A, for example by means of a presser 48, or in any other suitable way, as shown in figure 2G.--

Please replace the paragraph beginning at page 17, line 28, with the following rewritten paragraph:

--As mentioned previously, all the operations described with reference to the figures from 2A to 2H, are carried out simultaneously and cyclically on two plastic sheets SA1, ~~[[SB1]]~~ SA2 along the two processing lines 10A and 10B. Consequently, in both cases, the thermoforming of the two shells takes place in a substantially identical way, with both the molds facing upwards; moreover, in both cases, vacuum and gravity are appropriately used for controlling the formation of the sag in each of the two sheets SA1, SB1.--

Please replace the paragraph beginning at page 19, line 17, with the following rewritten paragraph:

--The example of figure 8 differs from the previous figure in that the cooling station 20 now comprises a shuttle 54 reciprocable along a guide 55, which extends on a side parallel

to the processing line ~~[[16B]]~~ 10B. The shuttle 54 is provided with two mold supporting surfaces 56, 57 which can be aligned with the thermoforming station 16B, by appropriately moving the shuttle along the guide 55.--